

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – November 5 - 9, 2012
Bill Newell, Principal Washington School for the Deaf

This week we vote for President of the United States and our other elected representatives. I thought we should have a civics oriented DCQW.

Lobbying is defined as the act of trying to influence politicians or the political process. Every citizen of the United States of America has the right to meet with and make issues important to them known to their representatives in our government.

Which of the notable deaf persons below is the first person to actually lobby in Washington, DC on behalf of the Deaf community?

- a. Laurent Clerc (Co-founder of the first school for the deaf in America)
- b. Robert P. McGregor (First President of the NAD)
- c. Frederick C. Schreiber (First Executive Director of the NAD)
- d. Gertrude Galloway (First female president of the NAD)

Go to the bottom for the answer.

Answers: “a” – Laurent Clerc was the first deaf person to lobby in Washington, DC when he went there in 1818 to request congressional funding for the newly established American Asylum for the Deaf (now the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut).

He gave a speech in his native French Sign Language to Congress and he met with Henry Clay, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The next day he met with President James Monroe.

This is an example of political activism and lobbying which is still alive and well within the Deaf community. The NAD and its affiliated state chapters actively lobby at local, state and national levels on the important issues facing the Deaf community. Political activism is an important cultural value within the Deaf community. [Cited from: http://www.deaftrivia.com/01_jan_2007.html].

Note: Previous issues of DCQW are archived at the Washington School for the Deaf website, www.wsd.wa.gov.